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Shortgrass Country

by Monte Noelke

In the front of a government office located on the main street of an outpost east of the ranch, a group of herders have erected a big white signboard declaring themselves by name in big bold black letters as the members of the county's game association. The purpose of the association is omitted in the sign, but the object is probably to choose mighty hunters, or perhaps to hire a coyote trapper to make it easier to raise kid goats and fine wool lambs on their ranges.

The men on this list are well known. On special feeder calf sale days in San Angelo they are quite prominent around the ringside and in the auction company's coffee house. Also, I run across them at the sheep and goat herders' conventions and hollow conclaves, and at the various other meetings that draw fanciers of cattle and sheep.

On the way back home that afternoon I tried to figure out why they were posing their club's roles in such a prominent place. I carry several cards to the same type of exclusive organizations, like the 09 Pass The Hat Trapping Club, or the Irion County Dues and Assessment Predator Control Group. But so far, those august collections of

mainly woolie operators hadn't published the members' name anywhere except in the secretary's account book.

Farther along the road, I began to think more in depth about what I knew of many of the members of the game association. After remembering the bulls and rams and one herd of hair goats I had brought over there, it struck me that they were hoping they'd be thought of and remembered only as members of a game association.

The longer I've thought about it, the better I understand their trick. They'll be mighty lucky if they turn that piece of white cardboard into a monument and cover-up, too. But as slick talkers as they've been on their other deals, they'll probably make this one work like the others.